

First Woman Justice in Brazil Has Confederate Ancestors

Contributed by Newsroom
Thursday, 16 March 2006

Justices on the Brazilian Supreme Court get to the court in much the same way as they do in the US: after being nominated by the president, they have to obtain congressional approval.

But whereas the US President also appoints one of the justices as the Chief Justice, and he remains Chief Justice for life, in Brazil the justices vote to appoint one of their peers to be Chief Justice (presidente) for a two-year term.

Yesterday, by a vote of eight to one, Associate Justice (Ministra) Ellen Gracie Northfleet was elected to preside over the Brazilian Supreme Court (Supremo Tribunal Federal).

Northfleet, who is descended from Americans who settled in Brazil (her grandfather was a Confederate officer who moved to Brazil after the Civil War), is the first woman to sit on the Brazilian Supreme Court and its first female Chief Justice. The Brazilian Supreme Court was established in 1891.

ABr